

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 - a Study Guide

**Hear this, O Israel:
The LORD is our God;
the LORD is the only God.
You must love the LORD your God,
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
and with all your strength.
These commands I am giving you today must remain in your heart,
and you must sharpen your children's understanding of them:
Talk about them both at home and away,
both when you go to sleep and when you wake up.
Wear them as a bracelet on your wrist,
and as a headband, to remind you.
Write them on the doorframes of your house
and on your gates outside.**

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

A. The Need to Focus on the Spiritual Truths

Some of the visible "reminders" of devotion to these commandments (such as "wearing them as a headband") are not necessarily required today, because we are under a *new covenant* (Hebrews 8). *But the attitudes that they represented are still required of all.* God gave these visible reminders for the purpose of teaching *spiritual truth*.

Obedience to the truth, rather than to the reminder or symbol, is (and was) God's ultimate desire. (Two examples: Psalm 51:16-17 - a humble spirit is more important than religious activities such as sacrifices; and 1 Samuel 15:22 - obedience to God is more important than religious activities such as sacrifices) A person who is willing to perform the visible reminders, yet is not willing to live by the spiritual truth they teach, is very offensive to God. (Such people are like the Jews in the days of the prophets, or like the religious leaders of Jesus' day - Matthew 23:23-24. Such people turn others away from God - Romans 2:21-24.)

B. The All-Encompassing Nature of This Command

Many people do not understand the all-inclusive nature of this command. We must do *all* things in a way that glorifies and honors God - even eating and drinking (1 Corinthians 10:31). To do it in *any other way* is to sin.

Questions:

- In how much of your life does God have first place? The following questions may help you explore this matter:
 1. Where is the center of your devotion; that is, what is the center of your focus, in your "everyday life"?
 2. What is the basis on which you decide what you will think, say and do?
 3. What is the basis for the things you do in life - the activities you choose to be involved in? Why?
 4. *Why* do you do what you do in life? Compare/contrast:
 - a. your willingness to obey this all-life-encompassing command (Deuteronomy 6:5), and
 - b. your willingness to do other things (while ignoring this command).
- Is there *anything* in life that you *don't* do as an expression of love for God? Is there anything you do without any concern over whether or not it pleases God?
- If you are not currently obeying the command to love God:
 1. When do you plan to change? (When does God say you must change?)
 2. List some specific changes you must make. Focus on specific changes, rather than on generalities.
 3. List some specific steps you can take (even if they are small steps) to begin these changes.
 4. Consider what Scripture says about your need to rely on God, for the ability to make these changes. When changes occur, what right do you have to congratulate yourself, or to become proud of those changes?
- How do *you* do what these commands require? As you think about this question, focus on the spiritual truths (your attitude and obedience to them), rather than on the visible symbol. How much of your life do *you* "exempt" from this command? How much of your life does *God* "exempt" from this command?
- According to Jesus, there are two great commands. Read Matthew 22:37-40. These commands are interrelated: You cannot pay attention to the one and ignore the other. Reflect on the "second greatest command" (22:39) - its application to you. What are some ways you need to grow in obedience to this command? [Note: The specific commands pertaining to the training of children imply *the need for you to have already learned to do these things yourself*. And the Bible's concept of "learning" implies the willingness to also *do* what has been learned (rather than simply knowing a set of facts, or merely talking about doing it).]
- In what ways will your willingness to teach your children (Deuteronomy 6:6b) be an expression of your obedience to: 1) the command to love God? 2) the command to love neighbor? In what ways do you need to improve in this matter? List some specific plans of action.